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Armenians Protest Killings by Russian Soldier

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Thousands of protesters took to the streets of the Armenian city of Gyumri on Wednesday, demanding that a Russian soldier who admitted to killing six members of a local family be brought to justice in their country, the Interfax news agency reported.

Valery Permyakov, a soldier deployed at Russia's military base in Gyumri, was detained by Russian authorities Tuesday when attempting to cross the border into neighboring Turkey. He was later handed over to his Russian military commander and admitted to the killings, the RIA Novosti news agency reported.

Permyakov's return to his military base prompted fears among the local population that he would not be held responsible for his crimes. Demonstrators gathered in front of the military base, the Russian consulate and Gyumri's regional administration building, Interfax reported.

"The issue surrounding Permyakov's transfer to Armenia has not been not settled," Interfax quoted Raffi Aslanyan, the prosecutor of Armenia's Shirak province, as saying. "The issue is on the agenda."

The Armenian Prosecutor General's Office has said that under Russia's Constitution, Russian citizens detained by Russian authorities on suspicion of having committed a crime cannot be handed over to another country, Interfax reported.

It remains unclear what prompted the soldier to commit the massacre, whose victims included a 2-year-old. RIA Novosti reported that Permyakov had entered the family's home on Monday night because he was thirsty.

A 6-month-old baby who survived the attack is currently being treated for stab wounds in a hospital.

Armenian lawmakers had said the incident would spark debate about Russia's military presence in the country.

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